liberality cost about 36,000*l.*,* and is in the style of the early churches of Northern Italy. It is not the style we should choose for an English church; but as this was not left at the discretion of the architect, no blame attaches to him in this respect. The chancel is very fully decorated with colour, but the colour is not to our eyes good: it is too red,—and the patterns, in a principal part, are too large and coarse. The nave, at present quite bare, requires colour; and this the architect feels,—for he had caused to be put up some temporary scroll-work in the spandrills of the main arches and around the arches themselves, in order to induce a decision to that effect. Unfortunately, however, these temporary colourings were scarcely the right thing, and so, perhaps, the object was rather injured than advanced. There is an appearance of thinness and weakness about the main arches, which colour would probably improve. This thinness would have been avoided if the arches, instead of springing, as they do, from the line of the upper diameter of the columns, so that they are far set in on the top of the capital, had been stilted, and had sprung from the outer line of the abacus, or nearly so,—the arrangement usually exhibited in the Byzantine churches.

But though there may be something to question in this building, there is much more to praise; and we have no desire to depreciate a work of great thought and labour, which stands alone in this country.

On the day after the visit to Wilton, the sad state of the town, and other causes, having broken up the set excursions of the day, we went with a pleasant half-dozen, fit though few, to *Romsey*;† but of what we saw there we must take another opportunity to speak. Chester, too, must stand over.

* The length of the church, from the western porch to the chancel apse, is 120 feet; the width, 53 feet; height of nave, 57 feet,—of tower, 100 feet.

* Truth to say, the meeting, as a whole, was a dreary one; and, according to some, this was not wholly owing to the epidemic. One correspondent, who signs himself "A Gentleman," and who, as we know, is one, complains of the want of any desire, on the part of those who had the power, to make parties known to one another. He writes, "If the secretaries and some other officials were a little less officious, and less given to pooh-poohing, and would consider it part of their duty to present to hosts and others, members desirous by them to have certain pretensions, the meeting would be rendered much more agreeable than was this at Salisbury."

ON THE ARRANGEMENT OF COLOURS IN ANCIENT DECORATIVE ART.

I VENTURE to intrude on your notice a few brief remarks upon certain coincidences in the arrangement of colours, which I have observed to obtain extensively in nature, and in ancient, mediæval, and semi-barbarous ornamentation.

It is not necessary that I should occupy your attention, by any lengthened attempt, to prove that ancient and mediæval artisans had, by some means or other, a happy mode of combining and contrasting, with exquisite skill, the most brilliant shades of positive colours. This facility, upon whatever principle it may depend, is not generally within the scope of the artisan of the present day; he rather trusts for his effects to the use of neutral, undecided, and delicate tints, avoiding for the most part any considerable amount of intense colour. I do not enter into the question of the propriety of this arrangement, but merely assert, what I believe you will readily admit, that brilliant colours are less harmoniously arranged by the modern than they were by the mediæval artisan. This is particularly the case when colour is used in the internal decoration of churches and of church windows.

It is a generally received opinion also, that British manufacturers are less tasteful in the combination of colours than their continental opponents. I call your attention to this assertion that I may afterwards point out a possible reason for this presumed inferiority.

It might be more difficult to induce you to believe that many barbarous or half-civilised nations are remarkable for the harmonious intermixture of their coloured ornaments, were we not able to call as evidence to the fact one of the very best authorities in the kingdom.

* * * *

If, then, I be correct in my assertion, corroborated as it is in part by high authority, it assuredly becomes a matter of no slight interest to discover any of the means employed by the ancient artisan, to produce this very satisfactory result.

It is, to what I presume to be *one* of these means, that I venture to direct your attention.

Some years since I had an opportunity of closely examining a number of illuminated MSS., of what I believe is allowed to be the best period of English mediæval art,—that of the three first Edwards. I was particularly struck with the uniform arrangement of certain colours, and remarked that the practice of the illuminators was—

1. To separate the prominent colours, red, blue, green, purple, ruby, violet, &c., from each other, by spaces or lines of *yellow*, *white*, or *black*.

2. To paint with brilliant colours, on grounds of *yellow* (frequently gold), *white*, or *black*; or, if the ground was of any other colour, to use *yellow*, *white*, or *black*, only for the ornamentation.

3. To combine two or more shades of red, or of blue, green, purple, &c. &c., without the intervention of *yellow*, *white*, or *black*.

4. To place *yellow*, *white*, or *black* together, or upon each other, without reference to the law which appears to have regulated the arrangement of all other colours.

Having carefully noted these laws—as for convenience I venture to call them—I was induced to inquire whether they were peculiar to illuminated books, and to the particular era of mediæval art, known as the English Decorated; to my surprise I found them of very general application.

I briefly notice a very few of the more prominent instances, mentioning only such as admit of being easily verified or contradicted by reference to books, or the contents of ordinary museums.

The mural paintings and other polychromic decorations of the Ancient Egyptians,* Assyrians,† Moors,‡ &c.

The vases and pottery of the classical period in Europe.

The mosaics of Italy and Sicily.

The illuminations, mural paintings,§ stained glass,‖ and encaustic tiles, of the middle ages in England.

The vestments of the clergy and nobility, before the Reformation, in which the varied colours were separated by golden orfreys, or by linings of ermine and miniver.

The embroidery of almost every country, except modern England and Germany, and particularly that of China, India, Persia, and Turkey.

The woven fabrics, as shawls, silks, and carpets of the same countries.

Almost all oriental paintings, toys, porcelain, enamels, jewellery, and inlaid work.

The implements, arms, and ornaments, of many barbarous nations in Africa, America, and the islands of the Pacific. And,

Heraldry, which presents perhaps the most marked example of the practice, having been less subjected to capricious changes of fashion than any other branch of ornamented art. But heraldry is also governed by a peculiar law of its own, which excludes it from the last of the rules regulating ancient colour, thus, metal on metal, being bad heraldry, precludes the use of yellow on white, or white on yellow. In all other particulars, heraldry strictly follows the rules, even to the admission of two shades of the same colour in diapering the fields of shields, a beautiful enrichment of the ancient heraldic painter, entirely neglected in the present day.

This list might be greatly extended, but I have done enough if I succeed in rousing curiosity, and inducing inquiry and examination.

In every case, however, exceptions may be met with, but the extent to which these laws were acted upon, and the relative proportion of the exceptions, may be well understood by an examination of three books, to which I solicit your attention, not only because they are most valuable authorities, for, or against, my argument, but also because they may easily be referred to, and thus serve to confirm or refute it, at least to the extent of the mediæval art.

1. "Specimens of the Geometrical Mosaic of the Middle Ages, by Matthew Digby Wyatt," containing 90 coloured subjects, and representing, with undoubted accuracy, beautiful examples of this exquisite art. Of these, eighty-five are strictly in accordance with the laws I have endeavoured to explain, while five only, and that in a slight degree, vary from them.*

2. "Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume, compiled and illustrated from ancient authorities and examples, by A. Welby Pugin, architect." This splendid volume exhibits upwards of two hundred and thirty distinct examples, subject to the arrangement, and only eight opposed to it, five of these eight in a very trifling degree.†

3. "Details and Ornaments from the Alhambra, by Owen Jones, architect." Out of sixty-five coloured subjects in this magnificent and well-known publication, I find two only directly opposed to the rules; a few others differ from them very slightly.‡ * * *

The coincidence of these laws for the arrangement of colour, thus influencing the art of various and widely-spread nations, unconnected as most of them were by local or by religious ties,—and extending from the earliest era of art, to the present time,—is at least curious and interesting. I believe that a knowledge of the facts may be *useful* also to the modern decorator and manufacturer. I will now endeavour to point out their probable origin.

One of the most original modern writers on art,§ states, in reference to architectural *form*, "I would insist especially on the fact, of which I doubt not that further illustrations will occur to the mind of every reader, that all most lovely forms and thoughts are directly taken from natural objects; because I would fain be allowed to assume also the converse of this, namely, that forms which are *not* taken from the natural objects *must* be ugly;" and again, "that forms are not beautiful *because* they are copied from nature; only it is out of the power of man to conceive beauty without her aid."

What is here demanded with so much boldness and truth for elegance of *form*, I claim with equal confidence for harmony of colour; it is impossible to imagine any beautiful or harmonious colouring at variance with nature, or at least with nature when expressing her lovelier attributes of harmony and peace.

If then the ancient and mediæval artisans, and semi-barbarians of every age, alike excelled in the beauty of their coloured ornamentation, it is probable they all took nature for their copy, which, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has remarked, "is always at hand, in comparison of whose rules the best coloured pictures are but faint and feeble. Now, all the great pictures of nature, when exhibited under ordinary circumstances, are painted strictly in

* See the coloured engravings to "Belzoni's Researches in Egypt and Nubia." I find from the notes of a gentleman, into whose hands I was permitted to place memoranda when he was about to visit the east, and who kindly undertook to procure information on the subject on the spot, occasional departures from the rule, with this general remark—"Most of the grounds are yellow or white, but sometimes black, but this is not invariable in the parts covered with hieroglyphics. The hieroglyphics when large are often of the natural colours, when not so, they are mostly blue, some of the yellows approach to a brown (the effect of time and dust)." I may add, from the information of another friend, that the screens in the Coptic Churches of Modern Egypt are frequently made from wood, dyed a bright red, ebony and ivory in beautiful geometrical devices.

† See Dr. Layard's "Monuments of Nineveh," and in particular, the coloured engraving representing a restored hall.

‡ See "The Alhambra," by Owen Jones.

§ It must be remarked that towards the end of the fifteenth century, and the decadence of Gothic architecture, frequent violations of the rules occur, both in mural paintings and in glass.

‖ The black lines in painted glass are merely the leads used to hold together the different pieces forming the mosaic. They are frequently arranged with much artistic skill in the folds of the drapery, &c.

* Published for the Author. London, 1848.

† Henry G. Bohn. London, 1844.

‡ London: published for the Author.

§ "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," by John Ruskin, p. 96. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1849.

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